



**U.S. Department of Justice**

*United States Attorney  
District of Maryland*

*Thomas M. DiBiagio  
United States Attorney*

*Northern Division  
6625 United States Courthouse  
101 West Lombard Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201-2692*

*410-209-4800  
TTY/TDD: 410-962-4462  
410-209-4856  
FAX 410-962-0693*

*Southern Division  
400 United States Courthouse  
6500 Cherrywood Lane  
Greenbelt, MD 20770-1249*

*301-344-4433  
301-344-4422  
FAX 301-344-4516*

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**FOR FURTHER  
INFORMATION CONTACT  
Vickie E. LeDuc, AUSA  
(410) 209-4885**

**CALIFORNIA MAN SENTENCED FOR DRUG TRAFFICKING IN MARYLAND**

**Greenbelt, Maryland** - Thomas M. DiBiagio, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced that Samuel Estrada, Jr., age 28, of Whittier, California, was sentenced today by United States District Court Judge Alexander Williams to serve a 139 month sentence followed by 5 years of supervised release in connection with his role in a conspiracy to ship large quantities of marijuana from California to Maryland over a nearly 2 ½ year period.

Estrada pleaded guilty on November 5, 2003 after a June 5, 2003 arrest. According to the statement of facts provided to the court as part of the plea agreement, from about January 1, 2001 to June 5, 2003 Estrada directed numerous shipments totaling 3,000 to 10,000 kilograms of marijuana from the Los Angeles, California area to Silver Spring, Maryland. These loads averaged between 1,000 and 1,200 pounds of marijuana, with the largest load being about 1,500 pounds. After delivering the marijuana to Silver Spring, the courier typically received suitcases or backpack type bags containing the marijuana proceeds in amounts of \$600,000, \$900,000 and \$1,500,000 for transport back to Estrada's house in California.

On June 3, 2003, 830 pounds of marijuana were seized by Arkansas State Police from a hidden compartment in a box truck owned by Estrada and passing through Arkansas. Couriers delivering the marijuana to Maryland cooperated with DEA and Arkansas investigators, leading DEA agents to witness the delivery of the 830 pounds of marijuana to Estrada, who also owned a home in Silver Spring. When the marijuana was transported to a storage unit in Silver Spring, authorities arrested Estrada and recovered the 830 pound load, an additional 200 pounds of marijuana, and roughly \$119,000. The estimated street value of the seized marijuana was \$1.5 million.

This case was investigated by special agents with the Washington Division Office of the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Arkansas State Police, and detectives from the Montgomery County Department of Police. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney James M. Trusty.